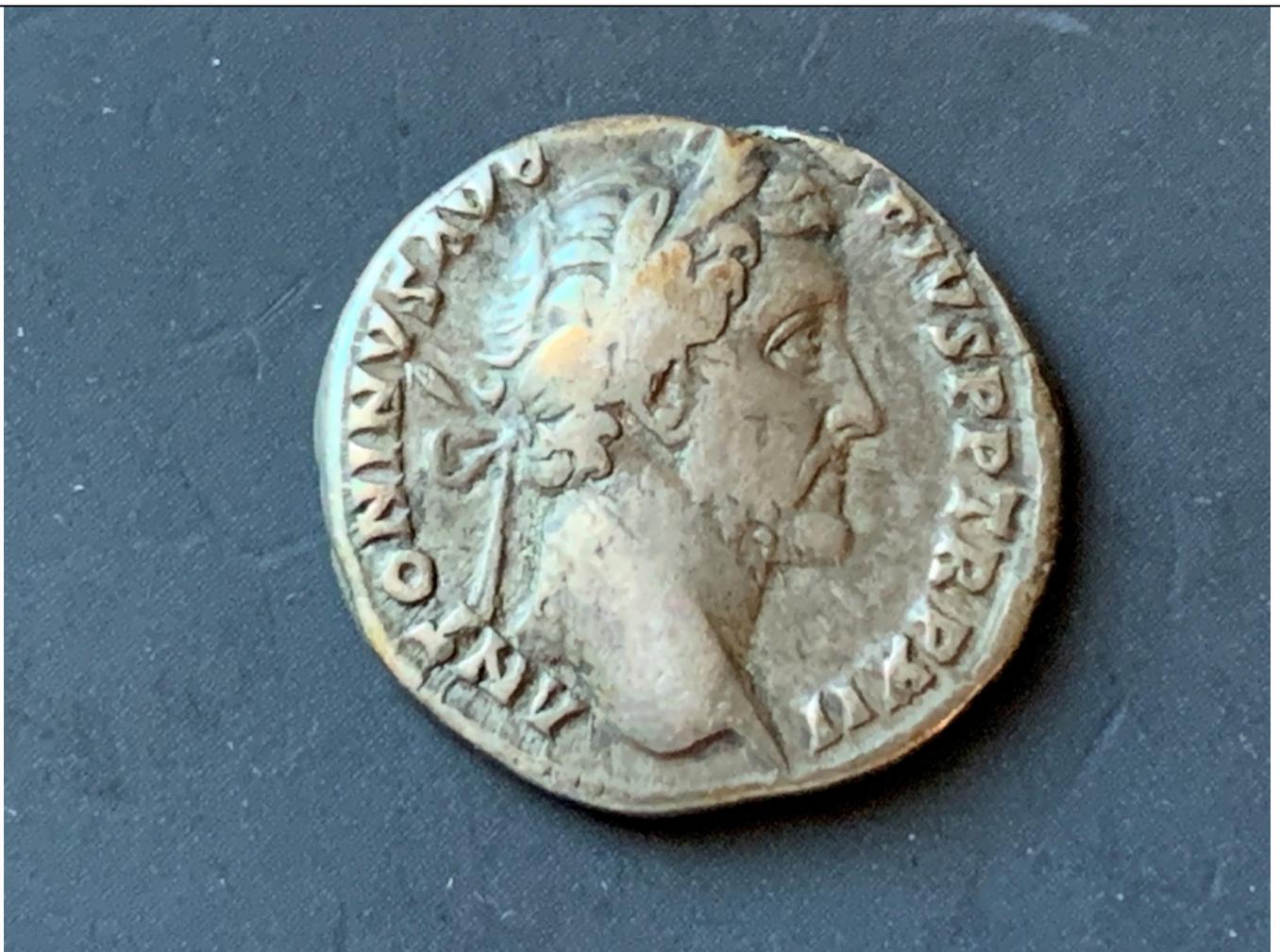


A Study of 1 & 2 Peter

Randy Murphey



A Study of

1 Peter

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“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls.”

1 Peter 1.6,7

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”

1 Peter 4.1

A Study of the letter of

1 Peter

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

¹⁰For, "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

(1 Peter 3.8-12)

With these words, including the scripture recorded on the preceding page, written a little under two thousand years ago, Peter seeks to encourage his brethren to bear up under the severe persecutions that are coming from their enemies, and to maintain a behavior that will glorify God. He exhorts them to not only stand fast within the trials they surely will face, but simultaneously to display a life of godly attributes, including love for their brethren.

They needed to understand the true grace of God that had been bestowed upon them as His disciples (5.12), and to emulate the same mind that Jesus had in living in obedience to His Father, while **HE** was persecuted (4.1).

What good will it do 21st century Christians to study a letter written nearly 2,000 years ago to a people who don't seem to resemble 21st century America; living under a tyrannical, pagan government that scarcely resembles our democratic government? Actually, as Solomon indicates, people haven't changed, and although the persecution may have been more violent under Imperial Rome, God's people have always been persecuted to an extent. These words penned by Peter are as relevant today as it was to those persecuted believers in his day! And, this is the word revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostle; directly from God!

We will see the benevolent and supportive nature of God; He is indeed a nurturing God, who cares for us even in the midst of the trial. He tells us to cast our burdens upon Him: "...for He will sustain you..." (Psalm 55.22). We will study the spiritual qualities that are to be integral to the Christian that will enable us to better serve God. After all: scriptural knowledge is really useless unless it is applied. God wants our lives to be changed by his Word.

Some facts about Peter's world in A.D. 64/65:

- Nero Claudius Caesar ruled the Roman Empire. He was the fifth emperor of Rome, from A.D. 54 to 68. Nero ordered his mother killed, then murdered his first wife, then later murders his second, pregnant wife Poppaea in A.D. 60. In July, A.D. 64 a fire broke out in a slum area of Rome that destroyed half of the city. Nero blamed Christians on the blaze, and suppression and persecution of the Lord's church became State policy. It was to remain so for almost three centuries. It was perhaps this increased persecution of God's people that Peter warned.
- In A.D. 66, Roman Gentiles in Caesarea kill 20,000 Jews.
- Herod Agrippa II was king over Israel from A.D. 48-90.
- Due to the iron rule of Rome, Jewish people began to openly revolt against Rome; living conditions grew worse.
- The first Jewish-Roman war was A.D. 66-70, culminating in the capitulation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

Format of the Study

This will have a similar format as the study guide used for "The Hebrew Kings".

Each page outline has at the top the scriptures that will be covered for that particular outline. The text box at the top is a high level summary of the material covered; this can be read to understand the main points. If only the summary text box were read for each page, the student can get a quick overview of the epistle. The left-hand column is a more detailed abbreviation for the scriptures covered; and identify any "take-away" messages for us. The right-hand column is a series of questions to get us thinking about the scriptures covered. Again, the important objective is to help us learn lessons that are relevant to our lives today, and direct application can be made.

-- Randy Murphey
19 January, 2022

Who was Peter?

The Apostle Peter is one of the great accounts of a changed life in the Bible... a person who became a great disciple of Christ and was tremendously effective during Jesus' ministry and the establishment of the church. I think it's fitting to see who our author was, so let's review the biography of the life of Peter.

Peter's Life Before Christ

The Apostle Peter may have been the most outspoken of the twelve apostles in Jesus' ministry on earth; he certainly became one of the boldest supporters for the faith, although he had humble origins. He was born at Bethsaida (**John 1.44**) about 1 B.C. and died sometime around A.D. 67.

Peter was originally named Simon (or, Simeon, **Acts 15.14; 2 Peter 1.1**) which was a common name among Greeks and Jews. Jesus was the One who changed Peter's name. Peter (or Cephas) means "rock" or literally 'Petra'. He was a Galilean fisherman from Capernaum, and was the brother of Andrew. The brothers came from the village of Bethsaida (**John 1:43, 12:21**). Peter was married and his mother-in-law lived in his house; and it was there that Jesus healed her (**Mark 1.29-31; Luke 4.38,39**); Luke places the incident at the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Peter, like all of us, was a sinful person. In fact he was ashamed of his sinfulness in the presence of Jesus Christ (**Luke 5.6-8**). Peter was perhaps the very first disciple that Jesus called along with his brother Andrew.

In that time, fishing was a physical, tough job, and the people who did it were most likely the same. They were probably hardy men, and may have had a tough demeanor. This is perhaps why James and his brother John were called the Sons of Thunder (**Mark 3:17**). Their's was a rough life. They must have been somewhat fearless too because some of the storms that came quickly upon the Sea of Galilee were fierce and furious. They often caught the fishermen by surprise and could easily capsize the 20 to 30 foot boats they used.

Peter was impetuous, and at times could "stick his foot in his mouth", but one thing that could be said about Peter was that when Jesus told them (Peter and Andrew) to "follow me" they simply walked away and left everything, (**Luke 5:9-11**). How many today would be willing to leave their own business to follow someone that had simply asked them to follow Him? Clearly, these men perceived that there was something special about Jesus!

Peter's Life with Christ

As mentioned earlier, Peter was among the first disciples called by Jesus and he was frequently the most vocal of the group – for good or ill! One thing that he is credited with is the special insight that he had concerning Jesus' identity. Peter was the first to call Jesus the 'Son of the Living God' – the Messiah (**Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20, Matt. 16:16-17**). This occurred at Caesarea Philippi. When Jesus called him, Peter knew that He was of God and felt unworthy to be in Jesus' presence (**Luke 5:6-8**). Even so, Jesus did not hesitate and told Peter and Andrew that He would make them "fishers of men" (**Mark 1:17**).

As indicated, Peter appears as a man of contrasts, especially in the gospels: he is not always reliable (like most of us!). Following his powerful confession at Caesarea Philippi, he objected violently to Jesus' predictions about His death. This prompted Jesus' strong rebuke: "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." (**Matt. 16.22,23**). Jesus may have been dreading His ordeal (see Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane); and if so, the last thing He needed was a beloved disciple telling Him He didn't need to do it. Clearly, Peter did not fully understand the Messianic role of Jesus.

Another demonstration of this erratic trait in Peter was his attempted walking on the water, reported only by Matthew (**14.28-31**). He began with a bold declaration of faith, but the rising sea frightened him. Rescuing him, Jesus rebuked him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

On the mountain when Jesus was glorified in the presence of Peter, James and John, Peter alone responded (**Matt. 17.4; Mark 9.5; Luke 9.33**), but Mark and Luke add that Peter actually did not know what he was saying. This glorification of Jesus was where His humanity was peeled back to show the glory of His divinity!

In the foot-washing episode in the upper room, Peter protested and Jesus had to again correct Peter's perspective (**John 13.4-11**).

Later, Peter initiated the inquiry into the identification of the betrayer (**John 13.21-30**). According to Matthew and Mark, all the disciples were sorrowful and asked the question, expecting a negative answer: "Lord, it is not I, is it?" (**Matt. 26.22; Mark 14.19**). Similarly, Peter protested strongly against Jesus' statement that all His followers were going to abandon Him, and Peter pledged his loyalty to the utmost. Jesus countered with the somber prediction of Peter's denials (**Matt. 26.30-35; Mark 14.26-31; Luke 22.31-34; John 13.36-38**). Later that evening, the prediction of Jesus came true – Peter denied any association with "the Galilean" (**Matt. 26.69-75; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 22.54-62; John 18.25-27**).

Even prior to the denials, while in the garden of Gethsemane, Peter with James and John failed Jesus in this critical hour by falling asleep; however, according to Matthew and Mark, Peter was singled out for a rebuke (**Matt. 26.40; Mark 14.37**).

Shortly thereafter, Peter displayed a flash of bravery, although misguided, when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (**Matt. 26.52-54; Mark 14.47; Luke 22.49-51; John 18.10,11**). Jesus' response was a mild rebuke of Peter.

The most tragic scene in the gospels involving Peter is when he denied his Lord, reported by all four gospel writers (**Matt. 26.69-75; Mark 14.66-72; Luke 22.54-62; John 18.25-27**). All four report three distinct and emphatic denials by Peter. Matthew and Mark report that he supported his third denial by invoking a curse upon himself and by swearing. The crowing of the cock abruptly brought Peter to his senses. The confident boasts of Peter earlier that night were meaningless when he faced danger and harm by being associated with Jesus in that crucial hour. Most significant perhaps is Peter's encounter with his Master in the courtyard of the house of Caiaphas when, after the denials, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter" -- a detail only in Luke (**Luke 22.61**).

These episodes of "weakness" by Peter are not meant to be disparaging to the man; but, are good examples to show that ANY weakness can be displayed by ANY of us. And, to Peter's credit, he was a major force in the establishment and support of the church, as recorded in Acts.

It is perhaps significant that Peter had a place in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus:

- Paul indicates that the risen Jesus first appeared to Peter (**1 Cor. 15.5**).
- The "young man" at the tomb instructed the women to report to the "disciples and Peter" (**Mark 16.7**).
- Although the gospels do not directly record such an appearance to Peter, the disciples did report to the men of Emmaus that Jesus had appeared Peter (**Luke 24.34**).
- John reports the episode in which "the other disciple" and Peter ran to the tomb (**John 20.2-10**). Peter was out-distanced in the race, but he displayed a measure of daring by entering the tomb first.
- Later at the Sea of Tiberius, Jesus appeared to seven disciples, including Peter. After testing him with questions, Jesus fully restored him with the words, "Follow Me" (**John 21.19,22**).

Peter and his involvement with the church

Peter displayed strong leadership in the early history of the church as recorded in the first half of the book of Acts. Shortly after Jesus' ascension, he presided over the appointment of a replacement for Judas Iscariot (**Acts 1.15-26**). Peter boldly addressed the crowds on the day of Pentecost, and his sermon was instrumental in the conversion of about three thousand (**Acts 2**).

After Pentecost, Peter miraculously healed a lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (**Acts 3.1-10**). Peter preached another sermon (**3.11-26**), which led to his and John's arrest (**4.1-4**). The next morning Peter spoke impressively in court (**4.5-22**).

Peter was the spokesperson in the episode involving Ananias and Sapphira (**5.1-11**).

Peter and John went to Samaria after Philip's initial work of preaching there (**8.14-24**). Here, Peter forcefully rebuked Simon.

Later, Peter performed miracles of healing in Lydda (healing of Aeneas, **9.32-34**) and in Joppa (raising of Dorcas, **9.36-43**).

Peter, however, still retained the limited perspective of Judaism. Although he rightly saw the continuity between the O.T. and “the Way”, he was hampered by the Jewish original teaching that made it difficult or virtually impossible for him to admit Gentiles. The Lord reaches out to Peter in a vision at Joppa (**ch. 10**) and illustrates that the distinction between Jew and Gentile had been eliminated. This was apparently a hard lesson for Peter, because in Antioch, some years later, he limited himself to the Jewish brethren. For this, he received a sharp rebuke from Paul (**Gal. 2.11-14**).

In an outburst of persecution, Herod killed James (the brother of John; **12.1,2**), and imprisoned Peter (**12.3-5**). That night Peter was miraculously freed by an angel (**12.6-11**). After reporting to the believers who were gathered at the house of Mary in fervent prayer for his deliverance, he departed “and went to another place” (**12.12-17**). The identity of the place is not given, and the movements of Peter from here on cannot be established with certainty.

Peter appears once more in Acts, at the Jerusalem meeting (**ch. 15**). At this meeting he defended the mission to the Gentiles (**15.7-11**). Paul identifies as pillars of the church James, Cephas (Peter), and John (**Gal. 2.9**).

Peter’s Martyrdom (?)

In the days leading up to Peter’s death, many of the apostles had been martyred. Did Jesus actually predict Peter’s death by crucifixion when He said that “when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and take you where you do not want to go” (**John 21:18-19**)? The church historian’s Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius state that Peter was stretched out by his hands, he was dressed in prison garb, he was taken where no one wanted to go (a crucifixion), and was crucified. He was said to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the way that the Lord Jesus Christ had been. It may be that Peter was a victim of the violent anger that Nero vented upon the Christians in A.D. 64. Eusebius dates the death of Peter and Paul in the fourteenth year of Nero (A.D. 67,68). This is not recorded within the Bible, so therefore cannot be confirmed. However, whether Peter was killed for his faith or not, he certainly exhibited a life of service to the Lord.

In Summary

A study of the life and character of Simon Peter reveals noble traits. His enthusiasm and boldness are worthy of emulation. He was extremely devoted and committed to Christ. He also illustrates, however, the danger of misdirected and superficial enthusiasm. Some of the sharpest rebukes in the NT were directed at him. His positive traits are inspiring and challenging; his negative traits are a warning. Enthusiasm and devotion must be tempered by a balanced and informed perspective. Peter could be overconfident in his enthusiasm, at times bordering on arrogance (as in the upper room); nonetheless he stands as a stellar example of bold allegiance and glowing achievements in the proclamation of the Gospel.

When was it written, and from where?

When written

The general consensus is that the epistle of first Peter was written in the period between 64 and 68. It is generally agreed that Peter was killed in the same time period. There is nothing in the epistle itself or in other books of the New Testament that places the exact time of writing.

Where written

From **1 Peter 5.13**, one concludes that the epistle was written in Babylon. The epistle clearly states that it was written from Babylon on the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia, but many people hold to the position that “Babylon” is a figurative term referring to Rome. For the early church, the city of Rome was a contemporary “Babylon”, due to its immoral and ungodly culture. However, many other scholars place the writing of this epistle actually in Babylon in Mesopotamia. The tradition about Peter’s residence and death at Rome is compelling, but there is no historical evidence that Peter was ever in Rome.

The major point, though, is that the origin of where the letter was written is not important to the message.

Written to whom?

The recipients of 1 Peter lived in five provinces in the northern, central and western parts of Asia Minor (modern Turkey): Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (see map on page 14). The NT contains no record of the evangelization of most of this territory. It is possible that Peter may have worked in part of this area during the time between his departure from Jerusalem and arrival in Rome.

B. Van Elderen writes”

*“The people are described as belonging to the Diaspora. This term (**John 7.35**) describes the dispersion of the Jews among the Gentiles. Hence, some have suggested that this term in 1 Peter identifies the recipients as Jewish Christians; however, such references as “the futile ways inherited from your fathers” (**1.18**), “once you were no people” (**2.10**), “among the Gentiles” (**2.12**) and the catalog of Gentile vices (**4.3,4**) can hardly be identified exclusively with Jewish Christians. On the other hand, exclusive identification as Gentiles ignores some of the distinctive Jewish elements (i.e., the use of the OT, the Levitical concept of the Church). Hence, it is suggested that the recipients were “mixed” communities consisting of both Jewish and Gentile Christians does justice to the various elements in the epistle.”* -- **The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 4**

The term ‘diaspora’ is used figuratively to designate Christians who are scattered in the world far from their homes. This characteristic is also suggested in the designations of the recipients by such terms as “exiles” (1.1), and “aliens” (2.11). It is also true that to a Christian, his citizenship is in heaven; so, in that sense we are ALL scattered!

The recipients of this epistle have been suffering various trials and afflictions (1.6) and the possibility of greater and more severe difficulties was very real! (3.13-17; 4.12-19). The exact nature of these problems is not known, although there are similarities to those persecutions endured by the early Christians as described in Acts and in some of Paul’s epistles. Imperial legislation and organized anti-Christian campaigns by the Romans apparently did not occur before Nero’s outburst in A.D. 64. The unorganized and divers trials of the recipients of 1 Peter are indicated in 1.6 (“various trials”); 3.14 (“for righteousness’ sake”; 4.12 (“fiery ordeal”), and 4.14 (“reproached for the name of Christ”). Peter uses Christ’s sufferings as a paradigm for the Christian in his experience (see 2.21).

What is the theme?

Clinton Hamilton writes: *“Job was the great book in the Old Testament on suffering. 1 Peter deals with suffering in the New Testament.”* (Truth Commentaries: “1 Peter” – Guardian of Truth Foundation)

The basic theme of 1 Peter is “the living hope in the midst of suffering.” This is a difficult-to-understand combination (also found in Paul in **Romans 5** and **Philippians**). Rejoicing in suffering is a unique feature of being a disciple of Christ, in which most unbelievers cannot accept. However, the example of Christ inspires the Christian and provides the pattern to follow (2.21). The key words “living hope” (1.3) complements very well Paul’s designation “the blessed hope” (**Titus 2.13**). This hope should be a present and living reality in the Christian – we should “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks us to account for the hope that is in us” (3.15).

Peter emphasizes this hope to encourage the believers in their present sufferings. This living hope in God (1.21) carries one through the fiery trials (4.12) and sufferings. The recipients of 1 Peter are experiencing persecutions and are faced with the prospect of similar sufferings. This is the privilege of the child of God – to be a partaker of Christ’s sufferings (2.19-21, 23; 3.14, 17; 4.1, 13, 16; 5.1, 9,10). In the light of the living hope possessed by the Christian, he can rejoice in the midst of suffering! (1.6, 8; 4.13).

1) The blessings of God's redeemed children (1.1-12).

2) The living hope and the Christian's present conduct (1.13-25).

- a. "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1.13)
- b. "be holy yourselves in all your conduct" (1.15)
- c. "conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile" (1.17)
- d. "love one another earnestly from the heart" (1.22)

3) The Christians are "living stones.....a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. (2:1-10)

4) The Christians' conduct and purpose:

- a. With respect to the Gentiles (2.11, 12)
- b. With respect to civil authorities (2.13-17)

5) Exhortations regarding domestic and social life (2.18—3.22)

- a. Relationship of servants to their masters: the example of Christ in His suffering (2.18-25)
- b. Relationship of wives to husbands (3.1-6)
- c. Relationship of husbands to wives (3.7)
- d. Relationship of believers to one another (3.8-12)
- e. Relationship of believers to persecutors: example of Christ in His suffering (3.13-22)

6) The call to sanctification (4.1-11)

- a. In terms of Christ's suffering: "so as to live...no longer by human passions but by the will of God (4.1-6)
- b. In terms of the end of all things: "Above all hold unfailing your love for one another.... The end of all things is at hand." (4.7-11)

7) The joy of being partakers of Christ's sufferings (4.12-19) – "but rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed." (4.13).

8) Exhortations to various groups (5.1-11)

- a. Elders: "tend the flock of God that is your charge" (5.2)
- b. The younger: "be subject to the elders" (5.5)
- c. All: "clothe yourselves..... with humility toward one another" (5.5b); "humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God" (5.6)

Map of “the Dispersion” (1 Peter 1.1)



1 Peter 1:1-12

Summary: -- Address & salutation; the Christian's home --

The first twelve verses of 1 Peter chapter one could be entitled: *"The blessings of God's redeemed children"*. Peter uses words such as: "elect", "sanctification", "living hope", "inheritance incorruptible", "kept for salvation", and "receiving the salvation of your souls" to indicate the glorious condition of God's saints! This is a sort of 'preamble' that will lead into a discussion of their faithfulness during severe trials; i.e. "don't lose hope!"

Discussion

1:1,2: Address & salutation:

Peter writes this letter: *"to the pilgrims of the dispersion..."*. 'Pilgrims' indicate that he was writing to Christians, and, most likely to both Jewish and Gentile Christians (4.3,4 most likely refers to Gentiles).

"Dispersion"...this term is from *diaspora* which means "a scattering". This may refer to those Christians who had fled to other regions of the world due to persecution; or, it may be metaphorical as ALL Christians are 'dispersed' as we are 'citizens of heaven' (Phil. 3.20).

We are also the 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God'; i.e. God KNEW we would be needful of salvation even before sin entered the world (NOT that He selects individuals to be saved without their knowledge and against their will, as Calvinism teaches).

1:3-12: The Christian's Home,

God's mercy has provided for us a 'living hope'; i.e. it will never die. And, it's an inheritance, which is something that an heir receives (Rom. 8.12-17); it is something that a person does not produce for himself, but is given. These disciples were in the midst of people who persecuted them, but the Christian has assurance that "the estate will be settled", and the reward granted. What sustained them during these trials was their **FAITH** and their belief, even though they have not seen Jesus. We do not have to see Him to love Him (1 John 4.19).

In vs.10-12 Peter addresses this salvation with reference to its prophetic background. Prophets were simply the 'mouth of God', and they certainly would have had interest in their prophecies regarding salvation through the Messiah. One of the profound blessings they spoke of was the "grace of God" (Eph. 2.8-10; Rom. 5.17). Although the prophets of old spoke of things that were not for them, Peter tells these disciples that the apostles preached the message for their benefit.

Questions

- 1) What does Peter mean when he says that we are "elected"? What is a characteristic of Calvinism that uses the terms "election" and "predestination"?
- 2) How can we have a "living hope"?
- 3) Can we have joy in the midst of our trials? How? (James 1.2,3)
- 4) How can trials actually make us more mature, stronger as a Christian?
- 5) What is the relationship between our trials, and the sufferings of Christ?

1 Peter. 1.13-17

Summary:

-- *Living a life of holiness before God* --

Peter has just written about our many blessings as Christians, including our eternal inheritance and having a living hope. And, that there are trials that are coming; some of them very severe. He has entreated us that our faith must be genuine, as it will be tested in the crucible of persecution. Now, he provides the examples and description of WHAT that proper living shall be so as to please God.

Discussion

1.13-16 *“Be holy in your conduct”*

Based on the preceding comments regarding our blessings from God relevant to our salvation, Peter now transitions into an exhortation on how we should live in order to please God. *“Gird up the loins of your mind”* merely tells Christians that they need to “get themselves together” and to “unhamper their lives” so they are free to live righteously. If this is achieved, then they will be able to live as obedient children, not living as their old lives in worldliness. One becomes a child of another by having been begotten by him. Being **obedient** is another matter which depends on the child’s own conduct. It may have been that they were sincerely ignorant... but, Peter indicates that their ignorance does not excuse their “former lusts”.

Who has called them into this new lifestyle? The Lord Himself! And so, in order to be pleasing to Him, it is worthwhile that they imitate the One who has called them: a life that is holy in ALL their conduct. This citation is mentioned in Leviticus 11.44 where God is admonishing the children of Israel to be holy and not like the heathen nations about them. If Christians are *“not to be conformed to this world”* (Rom. 12.2), then they are to come out from the world and not to contaminate themselves by engaging in the world’s uncleanness. They are to cleanse themselves from *“all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* (2 Cor. 6.16-7.1).

1.17: *Live under an impartial God*

The Englishman’s Greek New Testament renders the beginning of this verse, “And if as Father you call on Him...”. The meaning is that if they approach God on the ground that He is their Father, they should have due regard for His character and act accordingly. God is impartial to all, so they should live their lives in “fear” or in serious regard for His judgment to come.

Questions

- 1) What is the grace that “is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ?”
- 2) What does it mean to “gird up the loins of your mind”? And, give examples of what this means in the life of the Christian?
- 3) What are examples of “former lusts” these Christians may have engaged in? (or us?).
- 4) What exactly is “holiness”? Isn’t this only a Divine attribute?
- 5) How do we “call on the Father”?

1 Peter 1.18-25

Summary: -- *Our Glorious Redemption & God's Enduring Word* --

Peter describes our amazing redemption and its value: i.e. it is immeasurable! It simply cost the blood of the Perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ! And it is upon this foundation that our faith and hope endures. Peter again speaks of a quality that the disciple MUST have: a profound love of the brethren. He then concludes chapter one with the enduring Word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Discussion

1.18-21: *The value of Christ's Sacrifice*

The statement, "You were not redeemed...", is similar to the practice of a servant's freedom being purchased with a payment from either him or someone who is an advocate for him. These 'servants' of God had formerly followed a manner of life that was handed down by tradition from their heathen fathers (for the Gentile Christians). Rather being redeemed by gold or silver, they were redeemed instead by the precious blood of Christ. The reference to a "lamb without blemish" is from the requirement of that kind of animal sacrifice under the Old Law. The spotless life of Christ on earth showed one of spotless righteousness. "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth." (1 Pet. 2.22). It is a powerful statement that Peter makes: "He was foreordained before the foundation of the world." "Word" is from the Greek **KOSMOS**, and is used 188x in the Greek N.T., and is rendered "world" in every place except one. Its use here denotes "an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order" (Thayer 356). So, God knew the redemptive work of Christ, and **in these last times**, He was made known to men. And, at His resurrection, He triumphed over Satan and fulfilled His mission.

1.22-25: *God's word abides forever*

The writer of this epistle is the speaker in Acts 15.9 where he declares that the heart is purified by faith. Love of the brethren is one of those acts to be attained by this purification. "Fervently" means earnestly and denotes a love for the brethren that is warm and sympathetic. They were not begotten, or born again by the "corruptible seed"; i.e. the natural process, but by the imperishable word of God.

Peter quotes from Isaiah 40.6-8 explaining the temporal nature of man, regarding his flesh, and the permanency of the Word of God.

Questions

- 1) What does Peter mean that their redemption was not bought with corruptible silver or gold?
- 2) What is "aimless conduct"? Examples?
- 3) What is "the tradition of your fathers"?
- 4) How is our "faith and hope in God?" How do we KNOW this?
- 5) How can you demonstrate your "fervent love of the brethren"?

1 Peter 2.1-10

Summary:

-- A Heavenly Inheritance; A Chosen People --

Peter starts out that in order to attain to the development they need, they must get nourishment from the pure word of God. It's only by this spiritual food can they develop properly. To describe their special relationship with God, Peter illustrates that they are a "chosen people, a royal priesthood...His own special people". Then, as before, he instructs them on the proper conduct they must have while living within the world.

Discussion

2.1-3: *Spiritual Nourishment*

"Therefore..." indicates a conclusion; in view of the truth set forth in the preceding chapter, the readers are exhorted to do the following items. They must "*lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking.*" I believe that the term "*as newborn babes*" indicates two things: 1) If they would resist the sinful qualities in v. 1, then act as an innocent infant. Also, 2) they need to continue to develop and grow as is only possible by partaking of healthy nourishment: the word of God.

2.4-10: *A chosen people.*

The apostle now moves to a new illustration: Christ is indicated as a living stone which denotes that He is not a material one such as was used in the foundation of physical temples. "*Rejected by men...*" certainly was true! (Matt.21.42). Since Jesus is represented as a living stone for a foundation, then it's worth considering that the stones built on top are also *living stones*. **WE** are those living stones; Christians who are part of God's spiritual house, the church. As has been indicated many times, the building is not the church. The church is the group of individual Christians... i.e., the building is actually constructed of the living stones of the disciples. The disciples are also characterized by "*a holy priesthood that offers sacrifices*". Irony is indicated here: Jesus, the Messiah, was rejected by the builders (the chief priests, the elders and that generation – Mark 8.31) as unworthy. However, He has become the Chief Cornerstone!

See the powerful and encouraging identification that Peter uses to describe us: "*chosen generation... royal priesthood... holy nation... His own special people...*" After God had led the Israelites out of Egypt, He called them: "*And you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.*" (Ex. 19.6). Because of this sanctification by Jesus' blood, we now 'walk in the light' (1 John 1.7). God has richly blessed us!

Questions

- 1) What is included in "all evil speaking"?
- 2) How are we to take in this "pure milk of the word" so that we may grow?
- 3) How do we offer "spiritual sacrifices", and what are they?
- 4) How has Jesus, the chief cornerstone, become "*a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense*"... , and to whom is this directed?
- 5) What is involved in the sense that we are "a peculiar people"?

1 Peter 2.11-17

Summary: -- Living a life of obedience and faithfulness --

Peter again encourages the disciples to remain faithful and keep their distance from the world. Since they are living among the 'world', they are to provide an example that indeed shows that Jesus' followers ARE different, a 'peculiar people'. It is this type of living that will ultimately glorify God. After confirming that Christians are different, Peter then starts a discussion on different relationships, starting with how the disciple engages with the government.

Discussion

2.11,12: *Living within the world*

Peter starts a discussion on how the Christian should act within certain relationships. The first relationship is with the world... specifically unbelievers. He entreats the disciples to whom he's writing to abstain from fleshly lusts "*which war against the soul.*" This is indeed a battle that every Christian must fight. Paul himself struggled with this: Romans 7.13-25. This is why these sins are called "temptations"; they can have a powerful attraction upon us! It is only by keeping the focus on God that we can overcome this. Unbelievers do not understand the believer... and in some cases will disparage us. But, if we have a pure conduct, it may be that our influence may aid in their conversion, so that they may be saved, and God glorified.

2.13-17: *Submission to the government*

The next relationship that Peter presents is how the Christian must interact with government. The main point here is that God wants His followers to be law-abiding citizens of the nations in which they live. Paul teaches this obligation in Romans 13.1-7. However, this commandment is subject to the proviso stated in Acts 5.29; when the law of man conflicts with the law of God, it is the duty of the Christian to obey God. It is very clear from vs. 13,14 that our submission is to all leaders. Paul simply says in Rom. 7.1 "*let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.*" That seems comprehensive! What is clearly missing is the phrase: "*...except if you don't agree with the law or leader...*". Remember what Jesus said, when asked by the Pharisees if the Jews should pay tribute (taxes) to Caesar? "*Render to Caesar what is Caesar.*" (Matt. 22.15-22). And, Tiberius Caesar Augustus, the man who ruled the Roman empire at that time, was a cruel, pagan dictator.

"...yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice..." Although the Christian had been given liberty from the bondage of sin, that freedom did not allow him to ignore the civil laws.

Questions

- 1) In what manner may our good conduct influence the unbeliever? And, what is the "*day of visitation*"?
- 2) Explain how we can have 'dishonorable' conduct among the Gentiles (world); and why that can be so devastating to the cause of Christ.
- 3) If we believe a law of our government is unfair, or, if the ruler is wicked, can we disobey that law or ruler? i.e. can we be involved in revolution?
- 4) What does Peter mean when he says, "*...that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men...*" ?
- 5) Explain v. 17.

1 Peter 2.18-25

Summary: -- Submitting to masters & Jesus, 'the overseer of our souls' –

The next relationship that Peter addresses is between the servant and master. Slavery was a common circumstance in Jesus' day, and as such, Peter provides clarity on how a Christian in that relationship, specifically as a slave should act. It is to be an act of submission, regardless of how his master treats him. Starting in v. 22, Peter describes the compassion; and the SUBMISSION of Christ Himself to His Father's will, even though that submission would require His suffering and death.

Discussion

2.18-20: *Submission to masters*

Slavery was rampant within the Roman empire; it is said that up to 40% of the inhabitants of Rome were slaves, perhaps up to 350,000. Slavery was vital to the economy, and as such, dominated the culture. Since this was common in the first century, Peter explains how the Christian, who may be a slave, should act in that relationship. First, Peter said that a servant must be submissive to his master... even one who is harsh. **Clinton Hamilton** writes, "This commandment might be viewed as unreasonable in relation to those masters who are harsh and bitter, but the nature of the ruler of the house is not what determines a Christian's duty." (**Truth Commentaries: Guardian of Truth Foundation**, pg. 104).

See Paul's letter to Philemon. This is written to a Christian who's a *slave-owner*, on how he is to treat his slave, who is now a *Christian*, as well. It is very clear when reading this: Paul does not tell Philemon to grant Onesimus his freedom; nor does he tell Onesimus to flee the slavery. Paul also told Timothy in 1 Tim. 6.1: "...bondservants that are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor...".

When viewed in the context of the entire word of God, what is the primary objective for all men? To serve and honor God. When we become a Christian, we are in bondage to Christ. The gospel is not primarily intended to bring about social change, but to transform people into a "new creature in Christ."

2.21-25: *The submission of Jesus*

In this context, Peter says that Christ Himself also was in submission... He submitted Himself to the will of His Father, and through this suffered for our sins (4.1). Even upon the cross Jesus did not make any remarks about the cruelty of His enemies. He left the case in His Father's hands.

Questions

- 1) What does Peter mean that the servant be submissive to his master "*with all fear*" ?
- 2) So why does God expect a Christian, who's a servant, to be submissive to a harsh master?
- 3) Why is there "no credit" if you patiently endure the 'beating' for your faults?
- 4) What was Jesus' example that we should follow? (v. 21).
- 5) How did Jesus bear our own sins in His body upon the tree?

Slaves, Servants, and Bondservants

The Roman Empire Depended Upon Slavery

Slavery in the ancient world, not to mention the city of Rome itself, was vital to the economy of society. Although it was commonplace throughout the Mediterranean region, and the regions in the east, it was not nearly so vital as to Roman society.

The slave population was at least equal to that of freedmen (non-citizens), and has been estimated at anywhere from 25 to 40% of the city of Rome as a whole. One such estimate suggests that the slave population in Rome circa 1 A.D. may have been as much as 300,000 to 350,000 of the 900,000 total inhabitants. In outlying provinces, the numbers were certainly far lower, dropping to between an estimated 2 and 10% of the total. At the height of the Roman Empire in the mid second century AD, some have estimated that the total slave population may have approached 10 million people, or approximately 1/6 of the population as a whole.

Throughout the Roman period, many slaves for the Roman market were acquired through warfare. Many captives were either brought back as war booty or sold to traders, and ancient sources cite anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of such slaves captured in each war.

Debt Slavery, or the ‘Bondservant’

Nexum was a debt bondage contract in the early Roman Republic. Within the Roman legal system, it was a form of *mancipatio* (“hand”, and “to take hold of”); a solemn verbal contract by which ownership of something was transferred to another; i.e., in the case of a person who agrees to be a servant of someone. Though the terms of the contract would vary, essentially a free man pledged himself as a bond slave (nexus) as surety for a loan. He might also hand over his son as collateral. Although the bondservant could expect to face humiliation and some abuse, as a legal citizen he was supposed to be exempt from corporal punishment. So, a bondservant was legally different than a slave (a slave being captured and forced into slavery against their will).

-- Taken from www.worldhistory.org/article/269

Slaves, Servants, and Bondservants (cont.)

Scriptural difference between a “servant” and a “slave”?

In the New Testament, several scriptures use the word “servant” and “bondservant”. Is there a difference scripturally? For example, in one version of the Bible the apostles introduce themselves as “servants”, and in another version as “bondservants”. Do they both mean the same thing in spiritual terms? In Colossians 4.7 (NASB-2020) it reads, “As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bondservant in the Lord.” Here, it uses both terms to describe the same person.

Perhaps it would be beneficial to determine if there is a significant difference of meaning in the Greek between a *doulos* and a *diakonos*. The answer is that they have fairly different connotation.

The term *doulos* is a stronger term which can mean slave or servant, depending on the context. The word suggests a fairly strong subservient position, either voluntary or by choice. The word *diakonos* means servant, which may mean a literal servant/employee or a person who acts as a servant, but is not technically a servant, although also translated ‘servants’ in Matt. 22.13.. *Diakonos* is translated ‘deacon’ in 1 Tim. 3.8. It has a much weaker implication of being positionally under the person being served. When we say in English that so and so in the church is a “servant” we almost always would translate this as a *diakonos*, not a *doulos*; . Yet, again, the New Testament often has people declaring themselves *doulos* of Christ or of one another.

In Colossians 4.7 both words are used. Paul says that Tychicus, first is a *diakonos* – one who serves. Second, he is a fellow slave/bondservant of Christ in his work with Paul. To put it into literal English, ‘Tychicus is a servant of the church and a slave of Christ’ (along with Paul). Also, in Col. 4.12, the NKJV used the word ‘bondservant’ of Epaphras’.

The words *diakonos* and its variants and *doulos* and its variants are used quite a bit in the New Testament and their range of meaning varies according to context. In our attitude we can be a *doulos* of one another or a *diakonos* of one another, depending on the context.

So, there is a difference scripturally; *doulos* can be translated as either servant or slave. In English, the difference between ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ is huge! In Greek society, the difference between ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ is smaller.

Within the New Testament, the usage of these terms should primarily be taken to mean ‘someone who serves another’; i.e. it speaks to our quality as having the heart of a servant.

1 Peter 3.1-7

Summary:

-- Wives and Husbands --

Another relationship presented is that between a wife and her husband. Within God's plan of 'headship', a wife is in submission to her husband, her husband in submission to Christ, and Christ to the Father (1 Cor. 11.2,3). Peter indicates that a wife's submission is to her husband, even if she is a Christian and he is not; and it may be that by her spiritual example he may be led to the truth. Peter then provides examples of how a woman should live in a chaste and a pure demeanor. He then moves on to husbands, exhorting them to treat their wives with honor, respect and realizing that you both are heirs of the blessings of God!

Discussion

3.1-6: *Wives in submission*

Peter addresses a fourth relationship: wives and husbands. A wife is supposed to be in subjection to her husband. And, since Peter was writing to Christians, it would be possible that a woman who's a Christian may be married to a man who is not. Lest she think otherwise, Peter clarifies that she should still be in submission to him. One possible outcome of this is that *"without a word, they may be won by their wives."* In other words, by her spiritual conduct and example, he may be so impressed with her faith, that he may be motivated to obey the truth. Actually, this is a good principle for ALL Christians: as Jesus said in His 'sermon on the mount', we are to let our light shine and also to be the salt of the earth, *"that [men] may see your good works, and glorify you Father in heaven."* (Matt. 5.13-16).

Peter then instructs them to be more concerned on their heart, and not on the outward ornamentation of their bodies. You would be more effective in attracting your husband to God and spiritual matters by a chaste, mature demeanor. This passage is not teaching that jewelry nor quality apparel is forbidden, but rather that ostentatious and excessive adornment does not reflect the inward, **meek and quiet spirit** that is so precious to God. See a similar passage: 1 Tim. 2.9,10. This speaks to the wearing of fashionable and ostentatious apparel, although this context is within the church worship service. But, it speaks to dressing according to your heart's condition.

3.7: *OK, husbands, it's your turn...*

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding..." This means for the husband to act intelligently toward his wife; that he remembers that she is "the weaker vessel" physically. But remember that they are equal heirs to the *"grace of life"*.

Questions

- 1) How is a wife to be submissive to her husband... i.e., in what way? Do cultural mores of different societies and times alter this law?
- 2) What if an unbelieving husband tells his wife to engage in something that is not scriptural?
- 3) What does Peter mean, *"...when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."* (v. 2). What is meant by "fear"?
- 4) OK, so, how do we make the application? i.e., how do we put this into practice? **WHAT** should we wear and not wear?
- 5) How is a husband to provide honor to his wife?

1 Peter 3.8-12

Summary:

-- Relation of one to each other --

Peter's last discussion of a relationship is for Christians in their various, general walks of life. They are to be "of one mind", compassionate, loving each other, tenderhearted, refraining from evil speech, etc. In a sense, this last relationship discussion infers that we are to be submissive to each other! That we tend to put other's first; before our own wishes. If we do this, *"the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers."*

Discussion

3.8,9: *The qualities of a Christian*

"be of one mind." This means to have unity on the matters that pertain to the service of Christ, especially those that have to do with the treatment of each other. This does not mean "uniformity", or, that we are exactly the same.

"having compassion for each other" The Greek word used here implies "sympathetic".

"love as brothers...tenderhearted...courteous" A strong familial love; having pity on one another; humble-minded.

"Not returning evil for evil...reviling" Christians do not retaliate, are not vengeful. (Rom. 12.19).

"but, blessing..." Disciples must be willing to do good; to 'bless'. If the Christian lives after this manner, then he will receive blessings from God.

3.10,11: *Our attitude*

This is a quote from Psalm 34.12, and it is presented as a higher basis for an enjoyable life than the popular standards of the world. An evil tongue is one that speaks to the injury of another's good name; and to speak guile is to use speech that is deceitful. James says in 3.1-12 *"But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."* Tremendous harm has been done to relationships merely by the spoken word!

"Let him turn away from evil..." The Christian needs to wear his Nike's! We need to **flee** evil (1 Cor. 6.18; 1 Tim. 6.11). **"Seek peace..."** (1 Thess. 5.13).

3.12: *The Lord our Protector!*

The Lord sees everything at all times, and in all places. This indicates that He is a faithful guardian that keeps watch over His charge; and His ears are open to our prayers. (Isaiah 66.2)

Questions

- 1) Explain the difference between "UNITY" and "UNIFORMITY".
- 2) Provide examples of how we can show compassion, love, tender-heartedness, and courtesy to our brothers & sisters.
- 3) What does James mean in when he says *"No man can tame the tongue"*?
- 4) How does God "have our back (v.12)"? He clearly doesn't insulate us from ALL trials and heartbreak, so, how does He support us? (see 1 Cor. 10.11-13)
- 5) How is the Lord's face *"against those who do evil"*?

1 Peter 3.13-22

Summary:

-- Suffering of the disciple and his Lord --

The remainder of the epistle deals with suffering for righteousness. And, it is comprehensive: it discusses suffering both by the faithful Christian, and by the Lord Himself. In dealing with this subject, the author is providing the reader with instructions on HOW to deal with the suffering faithful Christians may endure; i.e., what does God expect of us? Peter impresses upon us that even if we suffer, "do not be afraid of their threats". He then provides encouragement via the knowledge that even Christ Himself suffered because of His righteousness; so, you are in good company!

Discussion

3.13-17: *Suffering for righteousness*

"And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?" This appears to be saying that if you are faithful to God, and righteous, then no one will cause you harm. However, we know that is not the point of the text. Many disciples were murdered due to their faith: John the Baptist, James the son of Zebedee, Stephen, and others, not the least of which was Jesus! I think the point of this text is if the disciple is faithful, then in the end he will be the true victor. Jesus taught this principle in Matt. 10.28. 1 Pet. 3.14 has a similar thought.

"But sanctify the Lord God." Sanctify means: "To render or acknowledge to venerable [sacred], to hallow" (Thayer's first definition). Sanctify can mean to make ourselves holy, or, I think in this case, to realize **God** is holy (see Eph. 3.17). One way to honor God is to be able to "give a defense to everyone...", it is shameful for the mature Christian to not be able to defend WHY he's a Christian! Finally, if we are faithful and holy, then when we are reviled we know their accusations are meaningless.

3.18-22: *Christ in His suffering*

Peter just spoke (vs.13,14) of the Christian suffering, now he transitions to the suffering of Christ. "Christ also suffered once for sins...". Just as the disciples will suffer for their righteousness, so did the Messiah.

Next, he indicates that Jesus "preached to the spirits in prison...". This is NOT the notion that Jesus preached to people who were dead. These were people who were dead in Peter's time, but, while alive during the time of Noah, they were preached to by Noah ("a preacher of righteousness" 2 Pet. 2.5). Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, preached to the unbelievers through Noah. Like water purged the sinful world, baptism purges us of sin.

Questions

- 1) HOW can we not be afraid of the threats of the evil doers who persecute us?
- 2) How do you "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts"?
- 3) What does it mean to "always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for the hope that lies within you."?... and, HOW do we do this? How do we do this in "meekness and fear"?
- 4) What does the text of v.20 mean, "...when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah,..."?
- 5) What are the implications that Jesus "...is at the right hand of God"?

2 Peter 4.1-6

Summary: -- Cease from sin through the example of Christ --

Peter has established that Christ has suffered in the flesh for us. He now discusses how the attitude that Jesus exhibited can also help us to remain faithful in OUR suffering. Peter wants us to “*arm ourselves with the same mind...*” If we do, then we, too, can make it through the difficult trials that are coming. Peter speaks of the past life of these Christians, as unbelievers, and how our life-change impacts how the people of the world treat these disciples. But, keep hope!... we will “*live according to God in the spirit.*” We have a crown of righteousness awaiting us!

Discussion

4.1,2: *Arm yourselves....*

Continuing Peter’s discourse on Jesus’ suffering in the flesh, he now reveals a tool that the Christian can use to help US through our suffering! It is a ‘mindset’ that Jesus had. This is almost a new piece of armor (Eph. 6.11), i.e. **He looked beneath His suffering to see His Father’s plan.** John 8.29: Jesus did the will of His Father; that’s what enabled Him to focus on the goal, even through the pain. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed THREE times for the “cup” to be removed... but, He always ended with, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” So, He looked **BEYOND** the suffering to the **PURPOSE** of God. The Hebrew writer says in Heb. 12.2 “*...Jesus,..... who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Jesus endured the pain of the cross because He could see what was on the other side!

4.3: *Our past life before redemption*

These Christians to whom Peter is writing who in their past life as an unbeliever, engaged in the “will of the Gentiles” or, ‘the world’: (all kinds of immoralities, including drinking parties, sexual pursuits, and even idolatries). This is encouraging that even people who can come from that type of lifestyle can become sanctified and holy by the blood of Jesus!

4.4-6: *How the world treats us*

“*...they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation....*”. After “running” with your past friends, they don’t understand your abrupt behavior change after becoming a Christian. It is strange to them that you’ve given up your past lifestyle.

“*...speaking evil of you...*” So, since you’ve changed, they mock or insult you. “*Gospel preached to those who are dead.*” Again, as before, this speaks of Christians who are dead NOW, but were preached to WHILE ALIVE.

Questions

- 1) What does it mean: “*...for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.*”?
- 2) What is the “Will of the Gentiles”? Provide examples that would be common today.
- 3) WHY do people that we used to know not understand our lifestyle change when we become a Christian?
- 4) To what will the evil-doers “*...give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead*”?
- 5) Explain the phrase: “*For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are dead, that **they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.***”

2 Peter 4.7-11

Summary:

-- Serving for God's Glory --

After telling disciples how to "arm yourselves with the mind of Christ" in order to stand firm in the midst of persecution and trials, Peter now picks up the thread from the first part of chapter three on how we should act. He starts by telling them "*the end is at hand*", then provides very practical instruction on serving so as to please God. Why? So, "...that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...".

Discussion

4.7: *The end of all things is at hand...*

"*The end of all things is at hand...*", comparatively speaking, for "...our life upon this earth is but a span." With the day of judgment an assured event and possibly not far away, it behooves us to be serious minded. "...watchful in your prayers..." is the same as Jesus taught while here (Matt. 26.42).

4.8-10: *Duties to brethren*

"*And above all things have fervent love for one another...*"

Fervent love means to have a genuine interest in their welfare. A profound way to measure this love is John 15.13: "*Greater love has no one than that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"

"*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*" This is the treatment to be shown by the brethren to one another, and is different than to 'strangers' (Heb. 13.2). Want to see an example of hospitality? See the 'good Samaritan' (Luke 10.33). By the way, grumbling (complaining) is a sin (Phil. 2.14)!

"*As each of you has received a gift, minister it to one another...*" This is the last instruction of responsibilities that disciples have to one another in this section. "**Gift**" is from the term *charisma* that means "*a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own*" (Thayer). Some of these were probably those mentioned in Rom. 12.6, however, these were not all miraculous gifts, as we see in Romans 12; some were just normal talents. So, whatever gift you have, USE IT for the benefit of fellow Christians.

4.11: *Duty to God*

"*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*". In the usage here, 'oracle' refers to the word of God: **scripture**. Therefore, when one preaches or teaches, he must do it from God's holy word.

Questions

- 1) Why is there an urgency to being "*serious and watchful in our prayers*" simply because the "*end of all things is at hand*"?
- 2) Explain how love will "*cover a multitude of sins.*"
- 3) Why do you think complaining is a sin; i.e. God doesn't like it?
- 4) What was an "oracle" in ancient times? Why do we need to speak as one?
- 5) What is the ultimate objective by our serving the brethren and teaching? (v.11).

1 Peter 4.12-19

Summary: -- The joy for being partakers of Christ's suffering --

Continuing on with his major theme in this epistle, Peter again speaks to the suffering that the faithful Christian may be experiencing. He stresses that they should not think it's unusual that they are being persecuted; they are Christians. In fact, he says they should REJOICE that they are suffering, as it validates their faithfulness to Christ. He does caution them that suffering due to wickedness or law-breaking is no cause for rejoicing. By suffering for Christ, they are building up treasure in heaven, and will honor their Creator.

Discussion

4.12,13: *The fiery trial.*

The phrase "fiery trial" may indicate a more severe challenge coming, or simply a way to express the current devastating suffering they are enduring. Either way, Peter says not to be surprised; even Christ suffered (see 4.1). In fact, he tells them to rejoice in that by suffering, they are being a *partaker* or partner with the Lord. This is not "happiness", or "fun", but is similar to what Jesus said in: Matt. 15.11,12. The sense seems to be that if they share in Jesus' suffering, they will also partake of His glory in the day of redemption.

4.14-16: *Only suffer as a Christian...*

Peter continues to press the point that if you suffer as a Christian, you will be blessed. To be "*reproached*" means to be reviled or to have belittling things said of one. If that happens to someone because he is connected to Christ due to his faithfulness, then he will have much reason to rejoice. "*On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*" This seems contradictory but he's saying that when the persecutors mock God He IS being blasphemed; but from the Christian's perspective, His suffering validates His faithfulness to His Father's will.

Peter then tells the disciples if they suffer due to wickedness THAT suffering is not honorable! But suffering due to your faithfulness can be a public embarrassment; Peter says DO NOT BE ASHAMED!

4.17-19: *Judgment is to begin...*

"*For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...*" 'House of God' means the disciples of Christ. God has judged them in their suffering for His sake, and have found them approved in His sight! If His judgment of His people is favorable due to their suffering, what do you think will be the state of those wicked unbelievers who are CAUSING the suffering? Not a good end.....

Questions

- 1) How are we "*partaking of Christ's sufferings*"? (v.13)
- 2) What does Peter mean when he says, "*the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you...*" (v.14)
- 3) What is a "busybody"? (v.15)
- 4) What does it mean "*judgment will begin at the house of God*"? (v.17)
- 5) What did Jesus mean when He said, "*And do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" (Matt. 10.28)

1 Peter 5.1-4

Summary:

-- Elders to feed the flock of God --

Peter transitions from how to “arm ourselves with the mind of Christ” and to accept the suffering that will be coming to now discussing elders and encouraging them to be the shepherds that God expects them to be. This transition is not unexpected: due to the persecution and suffering to Christians, elders need to provide the guidance, comfort, and wisdom needed by their flock, so that no disciple will be lost due to the difficult struggles ahead. By doing this, when Jesus, the Chief Shepherd appears, they will receive the crown of glory (as all faithful Christians will).

Discussion

5.1-4: Elders

The office of bishop is a matter of prophecy. To Israel the prophet Jeremiah said, *“And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.”* (Jer. 3.15). This is the same type of work that elders are to perform today. The same prophet later said, *“And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be faithful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the Lord.”* (Jer. 23.3,4).

The duties of the elders may be divided into different classes: (1) His duties to God. (2) His duties to self; i.e. examining himself as to his stature spiritually and, (3) His duties to the church. This last division may be further divided into six parts: (1) Shepherd, (2) Overseer, (3) Ruler, (4) Steward, (5) Leader, and (6) Example. It is to these men that Peter speaks.

“I also am a fellow elder...” Peter is not only an elder, but also a *“partaker of the glory that will be revealed.”* He fully expects, due to God’s grace, to live with Him in eternity.

“Feed the flock of God...” Nourishing sheep is ALWAYS important and the nourishment here is not physical food, but the word of God. However, during times of crisis, it is urgently needed to avoid loss of spirituality. *“Not by compulsion...not for dishonest gain..”* Elders should not do this because they are forced to (i.e. *“If a man DESIRE the office... 1 Tim. 3.1)*, and especially not for dishonest gain! His motives must be pure; it must be to sincerely care for the flock.

“Not lording....” The sense is ‘not domineering’.

Questions

- 1) Explain why Peter used the phrase, *“the elders who are among you.”* (V.1)
- 2) Explain the phrase: *“...serving as overseers...”* (v.2)
- 3) What would be the dangers if an elder served under compulsion?, i.e. he only did it because he felt he was forced into it? (v.2)
- 4) Why is it such a powerful way to lead when you are an example to your charges?
- 5) In what ways may an elder “lord it over the flock”?

1 Peter 5.5-11

Summary:

-- Submit to God & resist the devil --

Peter makes the point, after talking about submission in chapters two and three in various relationships, and submission to elders in this chapter, that, we are to be in submission to EACH OTHER. How do we do this? By having humility. And, taking this approach does not demean us; in fact, Peter says that if we do this, God will exalt us in due time! The next key point is, in order to be effective and holy, we **MUST** resist the devil. He is predatory and profoundly dangerous! Don't underestimate him! But, with God, we will be triumphant over him. Through God's grace, we will be perfected, established, and strengthened.

Discussion

5.5-7: *Submission and Humility*

Peter continues with one final point regarding elders: the younger must be submissive to them. This is not to say that the older members are not under their oversight, but perhaps it is that younger people in some cases can be "independent", and have difficulties in submission?

He then makes a comprehensive statement: *"Yes, all of you be submissive to one another..."*. After all the relationships he's discussed in chapters two, three, and five where submission is required, he now states that we **ALL** have to be submissive to each other. This happens when we try to please one another. This is the true spirit of humility. Arrogance and pride have no place in the heart of the Christian. *"God gives grace to the humble."* 'Charis' is the word for grace, and refers to the unmerited favor or blessing of God.

"Cast all your cares on Him, because He cares for you."
This is similar to Psalm 55.22. God will sustain us, and will never permit the righteous to be moved.

5.8,9: *Beware the devil!*

Peter now speaks about our greatest threat: Satan. He is a powerful opponent, sparing nothing in his goal to destroy us. He is characterized as a roaring lion, seeking to devour you! Peter says that the suffering of these Christians is not unique, but, are experienced by other disciples. This should provide us comfort.

5.10,11: *Closing comments*

The letter of First Peter is wrapped up with some VERY comforting words to these suffering Christians. The God of all grace has called all Christians to an eternal glory, or reward, after they have suffered a while. He will perfect, establish, and strengthen them. *"To God be the glory and dominion forever and ever!"*

Questions

- 1) Explain what it means to be submissive to an elder?
- 2) And, explain how we are to be submissive to each other?
- 3) What is "the mighty hand of God"?
- 4) What are the most effective ways that we can "resist the devil"?
- 5) How will God "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you"?

1 Peter 5.12-14

Summary:

-- Farewell and Peace --

Peter closes this amazing letter with some salutations and greetings. This was typical of letters written by the apostles. Apparently, the availability of this epistle to the brethren was somehow through the assistance of Silvanus. Peter indicates that this letter was intended to exhort the brethren to do what he has just stated and he testifies that this is truly the word of God. Finally, he encourages them to display love to one another ("*greet one another with a kiss of love...*"), and wishes them peace.

Discussion

5.12,13: *Silvanus & 'she who is in Babylon'*

Both Thayer and Robinson say that 'Silvanus' is another form for Silas. It apparently was by him that Peter sent this epistle to the brethren mentioned in chapter 1.1. This could be the same Silas mentioned in Acts 15.22 and he became Paul's coworker (Acts 15.40).

"...exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand." Peter **exhorted** them to receive the teaching that he has just presented and he backed that teaching up with his **testimony** that it is from God. And the conclusion that is reached by these teachings in this epistle, is that the brethren were standing in the *"...true grace of God."*

"She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you...". The New King James Version reads: *"The church that is at Babylon..."* The word *church* is not in the original Greek at all, but has been supplied by the translators. There is much disagreement on the location of "Babylon" as mentioned. Is it the literal Babylon on the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia?... or, many believe that it is a reference to Rome. I believe that a good argument can be made for either; however I believe that in the absence of other evidence, it means what it says: i.e., the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia. My only reservation is that Isaiah prophesied in Isa. 13.19 that when Babylon was destroyed, that it would never be rebuilt. The important point though is that it doesn't matter where the epistle originated... it's the message that's important.

5.14: *Amen....*

"Greet with a kiss of love..." This is an expression of what Jesus taught, that loving God and each other are the first and second greatest commandments, so we as Christians practice it! And finally, he closes this epistle in wishing them peace which, especially given the persecution that's coming, is comforting.

Questions

- 1) What is "the true grace of God" in where they stand?
- 2) Is this a command to "*Greet one another with a kiss...*"; and if so, should we do this today? (see 1 Cor. 16.20)
- 3) Explain the "peace" that Peter wishes for us all.
- 4) How would you summarize Peter's first epistle?

A Study of

2 Peter

“¹⁹And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

¹But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

2 Peter 1.19—2.1

What is the theme?

The church was being persecuted from without and subverted from within. Influenced by the many cults and religious groups in the day, the threat was that Christians could be led away from the truth by these false teachers. 2 Peter was written to strengthen the brethren against this influence, and Peter aimed to fortify their faith through proper teaching.

The purpose of the epistle is stated in Peter's words as "to stir you up by reminding you..." (1.13), so that they would (1) beware of false teachers and (2) live holy lives in accordance with the teaching of God.

Gnosticism: A False Doctrine

Gnostics is a term historians have given to a number of religious groups in the first, second, and third centuries A.D. **Gnosis** is the Greek word for knowledge, and Gnostics believed they possessed a special or secret knowledge. Many sects who have been identified as Gnostics believed that the world was ruled by evil forces (called "archons"). Among these evil forces, they included the God of the Old Testament. Archons held humanity captive in a state of ignorance and suffering. Gnostics believed that Jesus was a godlike being (rather than a living person) who had been sent to restore people's knowledge of their origin in the true God. People, they said, were made of body, soul, and spirit. People who lived only the life of the body could not be saved. Christians might achieve a lower form of salvation through their faith, but real salvation came through a superior knowledge (*gnosis*) of the life of the spirit and soul, which is the divine element in human beings. In the early centuries after Christ Gnosticism was a serious challenge, leading to the rise of elitist sects within the Christian community.

They taught that matter was inherently evil and can have no contact with God. The claim that God became man is impossible, since God and matter cannot mix. If matter is evil, how could God take a human body, still less suffer in one? The gnostic says that Christ only appeared to have a human form, He only *seemed* to suffer. It is perhaps what John was teaching against when he wrote: "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*" -- **1 John 4.1-3 (see also 1 Peter 4.2)**

1) Making the Christian's call and election sure (ch. 1).

- a. Perseverance due to our wonderful gifts. (1.1-11)
- b. Urgency of the reminder due to Peter's possible approaching death. (1.12-15)
- c. God's word is trustworthy. (1.16-18)
- d. The proper interpretation of scripture is important! (1.19-21)

2) Warnings against false teachers (ch. 2).

- a. Deceivers exploit the believers (2.1-3)
- b. Illustrations of Old Testament judgment. (2.4-9)
- c. Deceivers defame authorities. (2.10-14)
- d. Balaam, an instance of God's rebuke. (2.15,16)
- e. Freedom of the deceivers turned to bondage. (2.18-22)

3) The glorious promise of God about His return (ch. 3).

- a. Reminder of the former scriptures. (3.1,2)
- b. Deceivers and skeptics. (3.3-7)
- c. God's promises are real! (3.8,9)
- d. The coming Day of the Lord and our response (3.10-18)

2 Peter 1.1-4

Summary: -- Peter encourages them concerning the promises --

Peter starts his letter with acknowledging them as Christians: "...to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Then he reminds them of all the wonderful blessings that they enjoy as Christians: "...all things that pertain to life and godliness....given to us exceedingly great and precious promises...". This will be important later as he warns them against false teachers who can cause them to lose all these blessings if they stray from the faith into error. When they became disciples they "...escaped the corruption that is in the world..." and it would be tragic if they returned to that corruption.

Discussion

1.1,2: *Salutation*

Peter designates himself as both a *servant* and an *apostle*. It's not by chance that he refers to himself as a servant, first. Peter sees his role as one of service: first, to the Lord, then second, to serving people with regard to teaching and admonition. This "*precious faith*" was obtained, not at birth, but clearly stated due to the righteousness of God. Romans 10.17 states that this righteousness was revealed in the gospel; hence, people receive righteousness through the gospel. "*Grace and peace be multiplied to you...*" This also states that grace and peace come through God and through his knowledge.

1.3,4: *The "things that pertain to life..."*

All the things that pertain to life and godliness are through the divine power of Jesus Christ! The term "life" is not just physical life, but primarily the life we enjoy as spiritually alive in Christ. Paul said in Eph. 2.1 that you are dead in trespasses and sins. Thayer defines "life" here by: "*a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed*".

By using the term "all", Peter indicates that everything we need to be a godly person has been provided by the Lord. If we are not godly or righteous, then it's not God's fault.

"...in the knowledge of God...". Jesus says in John 17.3, "*And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*" So, this is a person who understands God and what He wants through an understanding of scripture.

"...exceedingly great and precious promises...". How are these promises "great"? It is because these are only things that God can grant! "Precious" because they lead to salvation and redemption for us! What specifically did they do? Provides an escape from our corrupted life, and then puts us into contact with the 'divine nature'.

Questions

- 1) Why is "grace and peace" used in conjunction with the "knowledge of God"?
- 2) What is the "divine power" of Jesus Christ?
- 3) What are "...all things that pertain to life and godliness."?
- 4) Define "godliness"; and "virtue".
- 5) What are the "...exceedingly great and precious promises..." that Peter speaks?

2 Peter 1.5-11

Summary: -- How to make your 'call & election sure' --

After Peter has reminded these disciples of all the amazing blessings that God has showered upon them, he now reinforces the character traits they should have in order to honor God for these blessings. And, by acquiring and fortifying these qualities, they will ensure that they will *"make their call and election sure."* He even goes on to state that if they do these things, they will never stumble

Discussion

1.5-7: *Attributes of the Christian*

"But also for this very reason...". Peter is going to tell these disciples that they need to add the following qualities to their character; why?... BECAUSE of those *"exceedingly great and precious promises"* that he already discussed.

Virtue: "Moral excellence". A Christian should never be satisfied with his present growth.

Knowledge: "Information". This type of information is contained in and from the Lord (Col. 2.3). So, if this information is vital to our faithfulness, then we need to try to accrue it as much as possible: i.e. STUDY!

Self-control: "temperance". Thayer: *"one who masters his desires and passions."* A stable and effective disciple (and leader!) is one who can control themselves.

Perseverance: "patience". Thayer: *"fortitude, steadfastness, 'a person who is unswerved from his purpose."* God gives patience to His servants (Rom. 15.5).

Godliness: "Piety". *"reverence, devout, one who has an attitude that is well-pleasing to God."* Living a life of respect toward God. (see 1 Tim. 4.7,8)

Brotherly kindness: "The love of brothers (or sisters)" From Greek word *Philadelphia*; the love which Christians cherish for one another.

Love: From the Greek word *agape*. See Matt. 5.43-48.

1.8,9: *Consequences of having/not having...*

The life of a servant of God should be one of growth; if the disciple has these seven qualities in his character, he will not be *barren or unfruitful*. *"For if he lacks these things..."* "These things" are the seven qualities which, if lacking, is similar as to having blindness in the individual.

1.10,11: *Make your 'call & election sure'!*

Both the "calling" and the "election" are from God: He calls us by His word (Acts 2.39); and we are "elected (chosen)" by God when the person responds to that call.

Questions

- 1) HOW are we to add these seven important qualities to our life? i.e., what process can we go about to achieve this?
- 2) Define or illustrate "virtue" and "knowledge".
- 3) Define or illustrate "self-control" and "perseverance".
- 4) With respect to the phrase *"calling & election"*, what are some false teachings that have sprung from a misunderstanding of this?
- 5) Does the term *"...you will never stumble..."* imply the notion of "Once saved, always saved?" If not, why not?

2 Peter 1.12-21

Summary: -- Peter's approaching death; the integrity of God's word --

After Peter has described all the important qualities that the Christian must strive to develop within themselves, he states the urgency of actually DOING this: *"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things..."*. In fact, he says that his urgency to do this is also in relation to his impending death. Next, Peter speaks to the value and the integrity of God's word. This "prophetic word" was confirmed; i.e. it's source was God! He then cautions us that *"...no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation..."*. That is: don't alter God's scripture to fit our agenda.

Discussion

1.12-15: Peter's impending death

"I will not be negligent to remind you. Even though these disciples were established in the truth, it's vital to be 'reminded' of these things, so that we keep our focus (see Acts 20.35; 2 Tim. 2.8).

Peter wants to remind them of these important things (the seven qualities), since he's facing death. Usually, the things that we want to complete 'before our death' are reserved for the IMPORTANT items. When Peter referred to "his tent" (tabernacle), he's speaking about his mortal body (2 Cor. 5.1).

1.16-21: God's word is trustworthy

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables...". Peter ensures them that what he's taught are not "fables", or untruth, in his message to them; i.e. it is from God. "Fables" is similar to "myths". To add confirmation to his statement, Peter says that he *"...was an eyewitness to His majesty..."*, i.e. that Peter SAW the miracles of the Lord. And, even God the Father honored His son: *"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."*...and Peter was there on the 'mount of transfiguration' (Matt. 17.5); he was also a witness of Jesus' resurrection and ascension (Acts 1.2, 9-11).

"The prophetic word....which shines as a light into a dark place...". "Light" has always been used as a metaphor for truth or holiness, and "darkness" for error and unrighteousness. So, describing God's word as a beacon of light that destroys the night is truly applicable (see 1 John 1.5-10). Peter again reinforces the point that since this is the 'prophetic word', we do well to heed! Jesus also stressed the importance of God's word, referring to it as *"...the bread of life..."* (John 6.48-58). And, Paul told Timothy: *"Take heed to yourself and to doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."* (1 Tim. 4.13-16).

Questions

- 1) Identify some ways that we can "remind ourselves of God's truth", so that we stay focused and knowledgeable.
- 2) What did Peter mean when he said, *"...shortly I must put off my tent (tabernacle), just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me..."*
- 3) What are *"...cunningly devised fables..."*? (see 1 Tim. 1.3,4; 4.7. 2 Tim. 4.4).
- 4) What did Peter mean when he said, *"...the day dawns, and the Morning Star rises in your hearts"*?
- 5) When someone asks you, "How do you know that the Bible is true?...that it is really from God?", how would you respond?
- 6) What is "private interpretation"? Please give examples.

2 Peter 2.1-11

Summary: -- False prophets are here, but, they are doomed --

After confirming the veracity and fidelity of God's word, Peter cautions them that there were false teachers of old, and there ARE false teachers within the world today. Unfortunately, there will be many who will follow them because of how these false teachers will distort the truth and make error so appealing. But, starting in v.4 Peter tells us that God is not unaware of what these people are doing, and He will exact His justice on them. And, since He knows what is going on, Peter says that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation....He does have our back!

Discussion

2.1-4: **Beware the false prophet**

"But there are also false prophets among the people...". After having defended the message that he taught these Christians, Peter now moves to attack the false teachers. Just like there were false prophets of old (see 1 Kings 18 re. 'the prophets of Baal'); he says there are false teachers among you NOW. They try to 'secretly' bring in their error... they know you won't want to accept it, so they are very deceptive (that's how Satan works, he *"transforms himself into an angel of light"* 2 Cor. 11.14). They go so far as to even deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Ultimately, they will bring on themselves destruction. Unfortunately, many will be led astray by these false teachers. And, Peter says that these heretics are motivated by greed.

2.5-11: **...but, they are ultimately doomed**

"But, if God did not spare the angels that sinned..." Peter delivers a pronouncement that God's justice will prevail: He did not withhold His judgment from the angels who rebelled against Him (see Luke 10.17,18; Rev. 12.7-9). God also did not spare the wicked world in Noah's day; so, don't be surprised when He dooms the false teacher.

"...but saved Noah, one of eight people..."; and *"...delivered righteous Lot..."*. These accounts should prove to us that God takes care of His own. He will *"...deliver the godly out of temptation, and reserve the unjust to punishment..."*. God promises to keep the godly out of temptation; not from ALL temptation, but that temptation to which they are unable to withstand (1 Cor. 10.13). What an awesome promise!

"...those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority...". These false teachers are immoral, living for their carnal nature; they are self-willed, meaning that they want to have their own way, regardless whether right or wrong. God will deal with these people.

Questions

- 1) Give examples of false prophets today; i.e. what exactly IS a false teacher?
- 2) Why do people follow these false teachers? Why don't people "test the prophets (spirits) to see whether they are of God"? 1 John 4.1
- 3) When does the "swift destruction" come upon the false teacher?
- 4) What does it mean, "...speaking evil of dignitaries."?
- 5) What did Peter mean when he wrote, "...angels...do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord." ?

2 Peter 2.12-16

Summary:

-- Description of the false teacher continues --

Peter continues his description of the false teacher. He compares them to *"brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed..."*. He doesn't pull his punches!: he paints these wicked people as willfully destructive of the church and doing this for personal gain! To lead one of God's faithful away from the truth and into eternal condemnation is something that angers the heart of God. Because of this, Peter says that *"...they will perish in their own corruption..."*. To illustrate the heart of the false teacher, Peter compares them with the prophet Balaam in Numbers chapters 22-24. Balaam knew the Israelites were God's people, yet he cursed them for personal gain. Peter says that is not different from the false teacher in his day (and ours).

Discussion

2.12,13: **False teachers compared to beasts!**

"But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed...". Peter says these false teachers are like irrational animals; and by doing so infers that their teaching is as irrational and ignorant as an animal. But the comparison is true since they *"...speak evil of the things that they do not understand..."*. These false teachers are reviling, speaking contemptuously, and disparaging things of which they are ignorant. Peter makes it very clear that they haven't bothered to learn the truth, and that it is for ulterior motives for personal gain. There are people who misunderstand the truth, but are sincerely desirous to serve God; such as Apollos in Acts 18.24-28, when Aquila and Priscilla taught him "the way of God more accurately". But that is not the type of person Peter is describing here.

Peter promises that these false teachers will *"...receive the wages of unrighteousness."* Just as there is a reward for a faithful life of service to God, there will be consequences for defying the Lord.

2.14-16: **False teachers compared to Balaam**

"...having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin...". Not that they CANNOT quit sinning, but due to their desires, they WON'T stop. This is because they have a *"...heart **trained** in covetous practices..."*.

Peter now compares the false teachers in his day with the sin of the prophet Balaam, found in Numbers ch. 22-24. Balaam is characterized as someone who 'loved the wages of unrighteousness'. God used a donkey to convey to Balaam His displeasure. *"...the madness of the prophet..."*. Perhaps this means that Balaam's madness was exhibited as he seemed to speak to the donkey without apparent surprise.

Questions

- 1) Explain the statement: *"They spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you."*
- 2) Explain: *"...having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin."*
- 3) What is someone who is an *"...unstable soul..."*?
- 4) Explain the whole point of Peter referring to the prophet Balaam.
- 5) So, how does as a Christian ensure that he doesn't become led astray by a false teacher?

2 Peter 2.17-22

Summary:

-- Deceptions of the false teachers --

The messages of the false teacher have no value; i.e. *"These are wells without water..."*. These people are crafty in their ability to lead faithful people astray of the truth. They accomplish this by delivering great and interesting discourses that promise the recipient enjoyments of the flesh and freedom to do what they want. By doing this, Christians who were once faithful now return to their past life of sin. Peter characterizes this as a worse state... Having been a faithful disciple, but now right back within the filth of the world! A fairly graphic illustration he uses is a dog eating his own vomit.....

Discussion

2.17-19: **False teachers are vain & useless**

"These are wells without water...". So, how useful is a well without water? About as much as a refrigerator without food, or closet without clothing. That's how Peter characterizes these false teachers. The end result for these people will be *"...the blackness and darkness forever."*

"For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness...". This means that they use compelling, deceptive language that would be appealing. Somewhat like an infomercial?? A huckster that makes you believe you CAN'T LIVE without this product! Remember the first time that Satan spoke to mankind? He was very subtle and convinced Eve (& Adam) that God was wrong, he was right, and they wouldn't regret eating the forbidden fruit. Satan was the first false teacher!

"For while they promise them liberty...". These false teachers entice their victims by promising freedom to engage in things that are not acceptable (passions of the flesh), yet they themselves are slaves to the very things they promise to others. Jesus taught that you will be a bondservant to something; whether to God, or to Satan (Matt. 6.24).

2.20: **Servants of corruption**

Peter now speaks to what the end result is for someone who is taken in by the false teacher: they transition from a position of faithfulness and in fellowship with God to again given in to the corruption of the world. What a shame; to have the "crown of life" in our grasp; then to lose it all!

2.21,22: **'Dog returning to his vomit....'**

OK, not a pleasant illustration! But sin is not pleasant; certainly not to God. See the parable of the 'prodigal son'. Jesus paints an image of the world, the pigpen, that the son sank to after leaving his home (Luke 15).

Questions

- 1) What are *"...great swelling words of emptiness..."*?
- 2) Explain the phrase *"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption."*
- 3) How is it that we can escape the pollutions of the world *"...through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*?
- 4) How can we resist becoming 'entangled...and overcome' by the world?
- 5) How is *"...the latter end is worse for them than the first"*?; for those that are faithful but then slide back into the rebelliousness to God.

2 Peter 3.1-9

Summary: -- God stands behind His promise --

One of the topics of the false teacher in Peter's day was to undermine the faith of some disciples in God relative to the second coming of Christ. Peter reminds them of all the prophecies given by O.T. prophets, and also the teaching from the apostles: i.e. that He will return! The argument that the 'scoffers' use is time, i.e. it's been a long time, and nothing's changed! For Christians, especially those whose faith is being tried due to persecution, this might be enough to cause doubt to enter their minds. Peter uses the example of how God 'cleansed' the world with the flood; and He's the same God in charge now. But, being God, He sets His own timeline.

Discussion

3.1-4: *'Scoffers' in the last days*

Peter notes that this is the second epistle that he's written to these brethren, and the point is to impress upon them important topics that they need in order to remain firm in their faith, especially regarding the false teachers. "...mindful of the words spoken before...". He directs their attention to the word spoken by the prophets of the O.T., and also of the messages from the apostles. The prophets "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1.21); and the apostles "spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2.4).

His caution is regarding the 'scoffers' that may question the Lord's return. They wonder where is He? Nothing's changed. By this they strive to undermine Christians faith; and they do this intentionally (...according to their own lusts...). It's been about 35 years since Jesus ascended (assuming 2 Peter was written about A.D. 65-68). And to some people, this may seem a long time.

3.5,6: *God is in charge of creation!*

What these scoffers forget (willingly!) is that God is in charge of the universe, and it is by His word it was created (Heb. 11.3; Gen. 1.1,9,10). Don't underestimate God! God keeps His promises.

3.7-9: *Be steadfast and diligent*

And, Peter says, it is by **THE SAME WORD** that the current universe is sustained. And God will decide when it's time for Christ's second coming, for judgment, and for the earth to be consumed by fire. So, don't lose heart Peter says! "Don't forget this one thing...". God doesn't measure time by our clocks; and He is longsuffering toward us; i.e. He doesn't want anyone to perish. So, the take-away from this first part of ch. 3 is to remain strong, confident, and steadfast in the knowledge that God is in charge, and Christ is coming!

Questions

- 1) What does it mean that scoffers will come in the last days "walking in their own lusts.."?
- 2) What was the message these scoffers presented, and WHY WAS IT DESTRUCTIVE?
- 3) Why does Peter use the illustration that he uses to refute the scoffers?
- 4) What does it mean that "...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." ?
- 5) How would you show that God is longsuffering; that He is truly wishing that none would perish in their sins?

2 Peter 3.10-13

Summary:

-- The Day of the Lord --

After dealing with the scoffers in the first nine verses and their questioning if Jesus is ever coming back; Peter now actually speaks of the return of Christ! The important point (and what these scoffers missed...) is that no one knows when Christ is returning, only God the Father. And when this happens, it will be literally 'earth-shattering'! *"In which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat; the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."* So since this IS going to happen, how are we supposed to prepare? He tells us this in the last few verses.

Discussion

3.10: *The Day of the Lord*

The "Day of the Lord" was a common expression in the O.T., and referred to a day when God's judgment would be meted out. Sometimes used to refer to judgment against Israel by other nations (Isa. 13.9); and also for the return of Christ (here, and 1 Thess. 5.2).

"...come as a thief in the night...". This is NOT comparing God to a thief, but only to the fact that a thief does not let you know WHEN he's coming. Also, even the Son does not know the time (Matt. 24.36-44).

The last sentence here disproves the doctrine that Jesus will set up an earthly kingdom after His return. The physical universe will be destroyed.

3.11,12: *So, what do we do?*

Now Peter asks a very important and relevant question: "Since the universe will be destroyed at the return of Christ, and we don't know the time when He's coming, what does this mean for us?"

This tells us that at the coming of Christ that will be the end of man's existence on earth, and OUR TIME WILL HAVE RUN OUT. There will be no last-minute appeals; our fate will be sealed. Therefore, it is prudent that we get ready now. Peter indicates that we should be living a life of holy conduct and godliness.

HOLY CONDUCT: The idea that a person is separated from sin and living a life of righteousness toward God.

GODLINESS: Piety toward God; showing Him reverence.

3.13: *The vision*

Our attitude toward this day should be like Paul: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness..."* (2 Tim. 4.7,8).

Questions

- 1) Explain the phrase "Day of the Lord."
- 2) So, since we don't know when the Lord is returning; what should be our attitude?
- 3) Describe what it means to be *"...in holy conduct and godliness."*? Be specific.
- 4) How do we "hasten the coming of the Day of the Lord"?
- 5) What is this "new heavens" and the "new earth"?

2 Peter 3.14-18

Summary:

-- Be steadfast and diligent --

As Peter closes this epistle he admonishes them, in light of the events that will transpire (2nd coming of Christ & destruction of the world) to ensure that they will be faithful and godly in their preparation. He tells them they have support: both from the Lord who suffered for their salvation and in the apostle Paul who's written to them. And he cautions them one more to time to beware the false teacher, lest they cause the disciples to fail in their faith. He closes with an entreaty that they will continue to "...grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.", and a declaration that Christ will have glory both now and forever!

Discussion

3.14: ***Be without spot & blameless***

So, after recounting the events surrounding the Day of the Lord from vs. 10-13, Peter tells us that we should look forward to these things and be diligent to be prepared. He desires that we will be found by Christ "...in peace...", which James tells us is the peace according to the wisdom from above (Jas. 3.17). "...without spot and blameless." We should be acceptable to Jesus in our life.

3.15,16: ***Jesus' longsuffering is salvation***

Peter indicates that Jesus WANTS us to be saved; to that end He is "...longsuffering in His salvation." That is, He gives us time to "work our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2.12). Perhaps Peter says this as the first 9 verses of this chapter dealt with the 'scoffers' who imply that since Jesus hasn't come yet; He's not coming.

Peter references the apostle Paul and his writings to them, and that Paul wrote "...according to the wisdom given him...", i.e., that Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Of Paul's writings, Peter says that there are "...some things hard to understand." Thayer defines this word as "difficult of perception". Not that these words are impossible to understand. But, they certainly would be for those who are "...untaught and unstable."; and again, these are those people who will intentionally "twist" the scriptures.

3.17,18: ***Again: beware the false teacher!***

Peter's final appeal to these disciples is to reflect on what he's said earlier in this letter regarding the false teacher ("...since you know this beforehand..."), since if they are carried away with the delusion and deceit of the false teacher, they will "...fall from your own steadfastness."

"Grow in the grace..." means to increase in the favor of the Lord. Then, he says "Him be glory...", ALL honor and glory should be ascribed to the Lord!

Questions

- 1) What does Peter mean to "...look forward to these things." In v.14?
- 2) What does it mean, "...to be found in Him in peace." ?
- 3) How is "...the longsuffering of our Lord salvation." ?
- 4) What does it mean to "twist" the scriptures; please provide examples.
- 5) What makes someone "untaught and unstable"?
- 6) How would you summarize Peter's second epistle?

Πέτρον

“Peter” (Greek)

So, in closing, the summary of 1 & 2 Peter is the following:

First Peter:

Addressed to the *“sojourners (pilgrims) of the dispersion”*. Written to Christians who were ‘strangers’ in the world. They were persecuted (3.17; 4.12), but the persecution did not come from the Jews, but from pagans (4.3,4). They potentially had certain faults and sinful tendencies that Peter wanted either corrected, or that they needed to be aware (2.1, 11,12,16; 3.8-12; 4.9; 5.2,3). The purpose of this epistle is to console them in their suffering and to exhort them to faithfulness and duty. This letter connects the second coming of Christ with the glorification of the saints. Possibly the key word to describe 1 Peter is **“hope”**.

Second Peter:

The reason for the epistle is found in the harm being done to the church by false teachers, who seemed to be of two types: those that wanted more liberty than God permits, and also the ‘scoffers’ who questioned the second coming of Christ, and therefore the promises of God.

In 2 Peter, it connects the second coming of Christ, not with the glorification of the saints, as the first letter, but now he stresses the 2nd coming with the punishment of the wicked. Perhaps the key word for 2 Peter is **“knowledge”**.

“He who does the will of God abides forever.”

1 John 2:17

